



## **Community Appearance Commission**

### **Minutes**

**November 1, 2006**

The regular meeting of the Salisbury Community Appearance Commission was called to order Wednesday, November 1, 2006, at 4 p.m. by Barbara Perry, Chair, in the Council Chamber, 217 South Main Street, Salisbury, North Carolina. The following members were present and absent:

Present: Greta Connor, Suzette Davis, Judy Kandl, Barbara Lawther, Chad Morgan, Barbara Perry, Sara Robinson, Bill Safrit, and Tom Wolpert

Absent: Cindee Bridges and Johnny Safrit

Staff: Janet Gapen, Mark Lewis, Preston Mitchell, Diana Moghrabi, Joe Morris, Terry Smith, and Lynn Raker

Barbara Perry, Chair, called the meeting to order. The minutes of the October 4 meeting were approved.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Neighborhoods & Education Committee**

Greta Connor stated that the committee has been involved in three major projects: 1) neighborhood entrance signs, 2) deteriorated housing study, and 3) repairs at Dixonville Cemetery. Greta summarized the first two issues for members and guests.

1) About two and one-half years ago, the CAC began hearing concerns from neighborhood leaders about signs for neighborhood entrances; this is still not resolved. Neighborhoods need an identity. City Council has appropriated the funds; a design has been voted on and unanimously approved by the CAC. Lynn Raker was directed to send the design out for bids in hopes that these signs could be installed by Christmas. The three neighborhoods to receive the signs are Park Avenue, Jersey City, and Fairview Heights. These neighborhoods need to take ownership and reach for a higher quality of life. A sign would be the first step in taking pride in their community. These leaders inquire regularly "when are we going to get our signs?"

2) The Neighborhood Leadership Alliance Housing subcommittee was established by the Neighborhood Leaders Alliance which met at One Water Street in January. There were 16 neighborhoods represented at this meeting; all were concerned about the extent of the deterioration of homes in Salisbury.

The task force defined the problem; they did a windshield survey, and took photos of homes in desperate need of repair. (Green Hills neighborhood is a disgrace to Salisbury.) The properties were rated as extreme, high-risk, and moderate. Maps were made and ownership was determined.

This committee spoke with the police department about crime in these areas. The committee received presentations from nuisance abatement, minimum housing and code enforcement officers. The committee spoke to other towns about how they address these problems. A residents' resources Web site is being developed. The committee's recommendations for consideration and further study will be presented to City Council in December. Suggestions include an increase in home ownership rather than rental, adopt higher standards for minimum housing, and increase code enforcement staff. They would also like to create an inspection process for rental housing, initiate a certificate of occupancy for rental housing in between tenants, and require police to notify landlords when violations occur on their property. The City of Salisbury should consider developing proactive systems for properties that are at risk, encouraging private financing for repairs and renovations, increasing funding, as well as, staff for the Community Development Corporation, and lastly, establishing a housing commission. Mrs. Connor asked Joe Morris to help facilitate these goals of the committee and to "help us help these people."

Joe Morris, Planning and Community Development Manager for the City of Salisbury, applauded Greta Connor for summarizing some very complicated issues. He expressed his appreciation for all the work the CAC and the neighborhood task force has done.

Mr. Morris distributed a copy of the resolution adopted by the Salisbury City Council on October 17, which sets out a format and work plan for a steering committee to look at branding and wayfinding for Salisbury. This will look at our community image and create an understanding of what Salisbury means and how it is perceived by folks visiting as well as the people who live in our community. The wayfinding system is a hierarchy of signage that helps direct people to and around the community. It has different elements at different scales for vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

What Mr. Morris would like the commission to consider is the idea of taking a half step back from the plan in place for the neighborhood entrance signs; he thinks the plan is a great idea and he agreed with everything that was said about community identity, and how residents living within neighborhoods need something that indicates their space. "What we have is an opportunity to go through what is about to be a four-month study that began October 31 that will involve people from all walks of life." From this, the branding and wayfinding system will be developed. This is an opportunity to incorporate the neighborhood signage system into something that goes beyond individual neighborhoods. Hopefully this will allow those neighborhoods to participate in something larger. It is a thematic approach with similar materials and graphics that would lend to an overall identity. All signs would be coordinated in a way that makes sense. From a practical point of view, it will greatly help long-term maintenance.

Two days (November 13 and 14) have been set aside for interviews of the public for their input on the branding and wayfinding system. The full steering committee will meet November 15 at noon at the Plaza, located at 100 W. Innes Street in the second floor seminar room.

Barbara Perry stated that it took two budget terms to get funding for the signs. The neighborhoods have been told the funding is there. It is of the utmost importance to keep the trust of these neighborhoods and to show results by installing the signs. We do not want the neighborhoods losing confidence in the CAC or the City of Salisbury. Mr. Morris assured the committee that the funding is not in jeopardy at all.

Barbara Lawther believes that the neighborhoods have waited long enough and it is critical that they have that identity signs will offer them. They need something now. Judy Kandl voiced a concern about the lag time from the branding idea and the rollout. How long of a delay is this? Mr. Morris responded that timing can be a hindrance; while the branding and wayfinding may add more time to the process, the overall product could potentially be better. Chad Morgan did not believe that it was acceptable to delay any longer.

Councilman Lewis is in a position to explain the opportunity to those neighborhoods and assure them that they will get their signs. Barbara Perry believes that the hard work and credibility of the CAC is at stake on this issue. His assurance could be helpful.

Judy Kandl is in favor of meeting with the three neighborhood leaders to let them know about the option to proceed with the current plan (A), or wait and be part of the plan that will be uniform throughout the city (B) (The City of Salisbury assures the CAC that they will be among the first three to get the signs.) or, (C) we can see how this is going and if it takes too long they can proceed with plan A. Barbara Perry said that two of the neighborhoods who are very outspoken about this should be given the opportunity to participate in the decision.

Tom Wolpert is a member of the Branding and Wayfinding Steering Committee and supports waiting to see what the committee results are. He believes that these three neighborhoods should be interviewed.

Suzette Davis would like to offer people returning to their Salisbury home to attend reunions a "step up" in their community. She believes that CAC should proceed with the decision that was made.

It was agreed by consensus to give the three neighborhoods an opportunity to decide whether to proceed or wait. Greta Connor did not want to delay talking to the leaders (Mrs. Robinson of Fairview Heights, Lou Manning of Park Avenue, and James Donaldson of Jersey City) This should be done before the next Branding and Wayfinding Committee meeting which is scheduled for November 15.

Mr. Morris will align the findings of the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance Committee with the City of Salisbury's system. This has become a grassroots effort. Members of this committee will meet with City staff from the enforcement side, the administrative side, and the planning/CDBG

side and see how we might use existing programs to address some of the immediate concerns and forecast some improvements or changes in terms of allocation or resources in the future.

Joe Morris believes that everything the committee noted in their study is right on, accurate and needs to be addressed. We need to get the information into the right hands and see if we can approach it based on what we have in place today. It is complicated; we have a Housing Authority, a CDC, minimum housing in our fire department...we are not well aligned in terms of dealing with all these issues under one umbrella. He will get this information in the hands of the City Manager. Barbara Perry stated that City Staff from all departments had been extremely helpful on this matter.

Mr. Morris will meet with Mrs. Connor and the Neighborhoods and Education Committee November 20, at 11 a.m. at City Hall.

Next the CAC asked for Mr. Morris's input on the improvements at Dixonville Cemetery. The CAC wishes to place a marker, clean up the now hidden infant stones, and repair the nearly 30 stones remaining. Betty Dan Spencer has done a great deal of historic research on this cemetery. Tom Wolpert feels strongly about involving people in that immediate area. Greta Connor said there are some people who believe they are already involved.

The City Council, through our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program identified this as a community-wide improvement which is an eligible activity for that particular neighborhood. The City could use and has allocated \$10,000 for the cemetery which can be used for an identification marker. The boundaries could be marked and at a later time fencing could be incorporated into the city budget. Marker repair would have to be done with other funds. Janet Gopen has a quote for under \$1,000 for the marker repairs. Mark Lewis suggested that the Civitan organization would be interested in this as a community project. Sandra Russell and William Peoples have voiced their desire to help with this project. Mr. Morris said that the next step is to develop a plan and get a marker in place this fiscal year. Janet Gopen will be the lead staff person on the Dixonville Cemetery project.

### **Art in Public Places**

- Mark Lewis and Lynn Raker will meet with Pat Ivey of NC DOT Thursday, November 2, on behalf of The Gateway Public Art Committee to try to resolve the issue of the middle pedestal on the proposed project. It is time to submit grants for this project.
- Three completed plaques are in the Planning Department and ready for installation. The installation of the Meroney is now scheduled for the Meroney's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration November 17.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Judy Kandl will be leaving the CAC to serve on the HPC so this is her last meeting. She has been a valuable member of the CAC and will be missed. Barbara Perry said she was disappointed to be losing Judy and voiced to the Mayor her distress of losing such a valuable and talented person. Judy has been a credit to the CAC and a hard worker.

Judy Kandl said she starts Thursday, November 9, on the Historic Preservation Commission. She did not volunteer but she was asked to serve in that capacity. Judy has enjoyed serving on the CAC. She praised the Community Appearance Commission for their hard work and their individual characteristics. She said that working with Lynn Raker and Diana Moghrabi was “incredible;” she does not know how Salisbury gets such high-quality employees.

Lynn Raker has submitted a list of recommendations for the open position on the CAC “by the state enabling legislation these are the characteristics of people—an interest in history, design, architecture, and experience.” Names can be submitted but the City Council will contact nominees regarding their interest.

On another subject, Tom Wolpert requested research on the house beside the “McCanless” house on Park Avenue. It is presumably owned by the Veteran’s Administration for American Veteran’s to live in, yet it is a disgrace that they are living in those conditions. The VA should be made to make improvements on those living conditions.

Being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. The next regular CAC meeting will be December 6, 2006, at Chad Morgan’s home at 121 S. Caldwell Street.

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